

Wars After WWII and Alabama's Role

Teachers' Document, Part One: The Korean War

Vocabulary: Syngman Rhee, exiled, Soviet Union, parallel, communists, occupied, Occupation, boycotted, Kim il-sung, armistice, de-militarized zone, munitions

Korea has a border with China on its eastern side. The two countries are separated from each other geographically by two rivers. The southern end of Korea extends into Korea Bay and the Yellow Sea making it a peninsula. Korea has the Sea of Japan and the islands of Japan as a border on its eastern side. (See Map)



In 1905, before WWI, Japan and Korea signed a treaty to make Korea part of Japan. The Koreans say they were forced to sign the treaty. One leader of Korea, **Syngman Rhee**, wanted to stop the treaty and was forced to **exile** to the United States during the years of WWI and WWII. At the end of WWII, when Japan lost the war, the United States signed an agreement with the **Soviet Union**, to divide Korea at the 38th **parallel**, where Korea becomes a peninsula. The United States occupied the peninsula and the Soviet Union occupied the northern part of Korea. (See Map)

The Koreans did not want their country to be divided. The United States asked the United Nations to decide if the country should be divided. The United Nations answered by voting that the Koreans themselves should decide with a national election in the north and the south. The **communists** in both the north and south **boycotted** the national election. Syngman Rhee was elected the president of South Korea, and the Republic of Korea was established as an independent nation. The Soviet Union installed **Kim il-sung** the leader of North Korea because no election was held there. The Soviet Union left North Korea in 1948.

During the Occupation, the United States had 40,000 WWII troops in South Korea. When the Occupation ended, these troops went home. However, 472 American military advisors stayed in South Korea to assist the South Korean army. South Korea had to defend its country with its own small army and a few weapons.

In North Korea, the opposite took place. Kim il-sung built a strong army with tanks and armored vehicles. North Korea's strong army attacked South Korea's weak army on June 25, 1950, six years after WWII ended. Two days later, the United Nations passed Resolution 83 to request that all nations who were members give military aid to South Korea. The United States led the military effort under the command of American Officers and American President, Harry Truman.

The battles lasted 4 years. WWII hero General Douglas MacArthur led the United Nations and US troops. He led the Battle at Inchon, which was an important victory for South Korea early in the war. However, General MacArthur made some mistakes. For example, he told President Truman that the Chinese would not help North Korea. In fact, the Chinese sent 100,000 troops to help the North Koreans. They were instrumental in the many battles the North Koreans won. Finally President Truman fired General MacArthur. Many battles were fought but neither North Korea nor South Korea were winners. For example, the Battle for Pork Chop Hill was fought at the end of the war. Chinese troops assisted North Korean troops. They fought the United Nations troops led by General Matthew Ridgway. The battle continued for 3 months and ended with no victory for either side.

In 1952, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president of the United States. He realized that even though 1.8 million American men and women served in Korea and 35,576 of those men and women died there, there was no progress toward either side achieving its goals for the war. Therefore, President Eisenhower called for a cease-fire to stop the fighting.

On July 27, 1953, in Korea the Korean **Armistice** Agreement was signed by United Nations delegates and not from representatives of any nation. The Armistice Agreement stated to

1. Suspend open hostilities
2. Establish a **de-militarized zone** (called the DMZ) between North Korea and South Korea.
3. Forbid either country to enter the land, sea, or air space of the other.
4. Arrange for the release of prisoners on both sides.
5. Establish the Military Armistice Commission to insure adherence to the agreement and to discuss violations of the agreement.

Alabama's biggest contribution to the Korean War was through its excellent military personnel and bases. Here are a few people who contributed to the war effort in Korea.

- Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr. flew 101 combat missions in the F-51 fighter and the Air Force's first operational jet fighter, the F-80 during the Korean War.

- Birmingham native Wayne Rogers starred in “MASH,” the TV show set in a medical facility in Korea.
- The Alabama National Guard was the third largest Guard in the nation with 12,000 men in 109 units in 1948. It was activated to federal service during the Korean War with a few of its units deployed to Korea and a portion of the Air Guard deployed to Germany.

Fort Rucker is Alabama’s largest military installation and it is also the home of the U.S. Army Aviation. Because of its unique location in Coffee and Dale counties on 64,000 acres, which provide a vast airspace for military flight activities, Fort Rucker is able to perform functions that no other military base in the world can duplicate. Fort Rucker played a key part in every major military operation involving the United States since WWII. During the Korean War it was a training site for the Forty-Seventh Infantry Division, a National Guard Unit.

Craig Air Force Base, known as Selma Air Force Base until it was renamed at the beginning of the Korean War, is located outside Selma, Alabama. In September of 1950, the 3615th Pilot Training Wing was activated on the base to train additional pilots for the Korean War.

Although the Korean War ended technically with the Armistice in the summer of 1953, soldiers from the United States under the command of American officers remain in South Korea to this day. The DMZ is constantly guarded and protected from attack from North Korea. For example, one American Army soldier was drafted in 1967 to the Vietnam War. Instead he was sent to South Korea. After the military plane landed in Korea at 2 am, he and his unit were sent directly to the DMZ to engage in a battle with the North Koreans, who were crossing the DMZ illegally to attack South Korea. This American soldier engaged in 50 battles with the North Koreans during his two-year assignment. He was eventually taken out of the battlefield and assigned to maintain and guard the **munitions** terminal because he had extra training in cleaning and maintaining all kinds of weapons and artillery. He also was assigned to be a driver for two officers ranked higher than he was because he was a respectful, serious, and competent soldier.

Vocabulary:

Occupied (Occupation): Take control of a place, especially a country, by military conquest or settlement.

In the Story: Japan occupied Korea for a long time.

Nationalist: A person who advocates independence for a country.

In the Story: Syngman Rhee was a nationalist in Korea.

Syngman Rhee: was a leader in Korea to make Korea an independent country.

In the Story: He was also the first President of the Republic of Korea.

Exiled: Being barred or stopped from entering your own native country.

In the Story: Syngman Rhee was exiled from Korea for his political activities.

Soviet Union: The Soviet Union was created after the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Russia conquered all the countries around it in the northern half of Asia and part of eastern Europe to form the Soviet Union which became a super power after WWII.

In the Story: The Soviet Union occupied North Korea.

Parallel: Imaginary lines on the earth's surface to help determine location

In the Story: Korea is divided at the 38th parallel.

Communists: People who believe in the Communism, which states that all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs.

In the Story: North Koreans are Communists.

Boycotted: Refuse to cooperate or participate.

In the Story: North and South Korean Communists boycotted the vote to decide to divide Korea at the 38th parallel.

Kim il-sung: In Korean, the people write their last name first. Therefore, Kim is the last name of il-sung.

In the Story: Kim il-sung was the first leader of North Korea.

De-militarized zone: a defined space that allows no military action in it.

In the Story: The Armistice created a de-militarized zone between North and South Korea at the 38th parallel.

Armistice: an agreement that is not a peace treaty but more of a cease fire.

In the Story: The Korean War ended with an Armistice.

Munitions: military weapons, ammunition, equipment, and stores.

In the Story: The army can train a soldier to maintain munitions to stay in excellent condition.